

COMMISSIONERS APPROVAL

GRANDSTAFF

ROKOSCH *gk*

THOMPSON

CHILCOTT *gc*

DRISCOLL *vd*

PLETTENBERG (Clerk & Recorder)

Members Present..... Commissioner Jim Rokosch, Commissioner Alan Thompson, Commissioner Greg Chilcott and Commissioner Kathleen Driscoll.

Date.....January 18, 2008

Minutes: Beth Perkins

- Commissioner Thompson attended a Mental Health and CDC meeting in Hamilton.
- The Board met with U.S. Senator Jon Tester to discuss topics of PILT Funding, Rural Schools Funding, and Economic Development in regards to Biomass and the Clean Water Act.

Commissioner Rokosch welcomed the Senator and staff.

Senator Tester stated he would like to touch on a couple of subjects such as PILT and SRS (School Resource). He stated the money will not run out until September. However, in September the money will not be there. He is working with Senator Max Baucus to get the money back for the schools. He is fighting hard for the funding. Commissioner Chilcott asked what avenues are open to fund it. Senator Tester replied at the federal level there could be a childcare bill where they could include it. Commissioner Rokosch asked what else they could do. Senator Tester replied he will get the contacts for correspondence to explain to them how important it is for this funding and have the money available.

Commissioner Rokosch asked about the status of the farm bill and the development of biofuels. He discussed the importance of economic development. Senator Tester replied they need to make further investments in them both. There are good components in the farm bill and it is still in the works, waiting for approval from the President. He stated the President may very well veto it. There is tremendous value in economic development. Even if the President does not sign it, there are more than enough votes to pass it.

Commissioner Driscoll stated she has information regarding ethanol and gave the information to the Senator. She stated she would like to discuss senior citizens. Senator Tester replied he just had a discussion with the local food bank about the number of seniors they are currently serving. The growing needs of the elderly are a concern and they need to be treated with dignity and respect. They need the support.

Commissioner Driscoll questioned the border issue for homeland security. Senator Tester replied he just completed a tour of the border crossing. He worked on a bill with Lindsay Graham to get money to the northern border to seal up the holes. There are lots of holes in the northern border and the investment needs to be made. They also need additional radar. He stated if they are going to deal with issues regarding terrorism and immigration, they need to beef up the standards.

Citizen Gene Williams asked about the funding for fencing on the southern boarder. Senator Tester replied if the Congress has allocated it, it needs to be used as it was intended. He will make a call to find out about the funding.

Commissioner Rokosch asked if there were any further questions regarding PILT or SRS.

Citizen Kirk Thompson stated Stevensville School District had been looking into burning biomass and it was approved, but the grant was significantly reduced to the point where they could not fund it. He asked if there is any way to come up with capital funding for it. Senator Tester replied he will get a hold of Matt Jennings and see if they can get some funding for the program.

Patricia Wilson asked about funding available to cut energy expenses. Senator Tester replied he will get Matt Jennings to provide a list for Patricia regarding reimbursement for energy expenses.

Citizen Lyle Pilon stated in regard to energy, the Senate is pushing towards technology and energy removal resources. He asked about participating in burning fossil fuels. Senator Tester replied it is all directions. Some are in favor of old energy resources such as coal. He stated in the recent meeting with the President of France, the President of France stated they are waiting for the US to take the lead on climate change. A lot of other countries are ahead of the US. Lyle stated the US does not want to participate due to the fact they are the leaders of energy consumption. He asked where they are for energy consumption. Senator Tester replied the last energy bill passed was focused on renewable energy. Hopefully there will be good discussion on renewable energy. He further discussed the plan to move forward. He stated there are two issues in Washington D.C.; one is Iraq and the other is energy efficiency.

Commissioner Driscoll questioned the air quality versus energy efficiency. Commissioner Chilcott stated through Forest policy, there is an effort to better the emissions dumped into Ravalli County and he believes federal government should step up. Senator Tester replied the budget for the Forest Service goes to fire fighting efforts.

He stated Senator Max Baucus is working on additional funding for them and Deer Lodge is working on restoration efforts for the Forest Service.

Commissioner Rokosch asked in regard to Forest Service budgeting, there are some concerns for the allocations going towards fire fighting. Senator Tester replied he would like to see zero allocations. These are the public's lands. Access to state and federal lands are important. Commissioner Rokosch stated he has mixed emotions. They are seeing huge allocations of the Forest Service budget to fire fighting and none for the lands.

Citizen Dave Schultz asked what happens when the Forest Service budget goes down. There is a recreational review but if they don't have enough money, they will close it. He asked if the Senator would be willing to accept other funding. Senator Tester replied anytime they could get, public or private funding, it is a good thing.

Citizen Robert Duvall asked about the "no child left behind" in regards to education. Senator Tester stated he will work to get it repealed, because it turns teachers into bureaucrats. It does not work for Montana.

Due to a time constraint, Senator Tester closed the meeting at this time and thanked everyone for their comments.